

Chaldeans in Southeast Michigan

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Research has shown that the diversity of people plays a powerful role in community growth.^{1,2} It has also been found that diversity is a basic driver of regional growth.³ Local research shows immigrants in Michigan are well-educated and entrepreneurial, and they are playing a large role in the economic growth of the region.⁴ Metro Detroit’s Chaldean community has been found to have an annual economic impact of \$10.7 billion.⁵ This report details research on Metro Detroit’s Chaldean, Assyrian, and Syriac community – who will broadly be described as Chaldean in this document. The Chaldean population in metropolitan Detroit is estimated to be between 155,000 and 160,000.⁶

The Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce conducted a study of Chaldeans in Metro Detroit in 2008. To examine changes in the Chaldean community since then, the Chaldean American Chamber and the Chaldean Community Foundation asked The University of Michigan-Dearborn and Kurt R. Metzger and Associates to conduct a new survey. In late 2016 and early 2017, surveys were sent to 1772 random households who were members of one of six Chaldean churches within the Chaldean Diocese of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Detroit. The response rate was 13%, and all 226 surveys used in this analysis indicated that at least one member of the household was of Chaldean ancestry.

The survey collected basic demographics of people in the household, including age, gender, education, country of birth, and employment status. Questions also asked about the household income, ownership of businesses, and investments by the household.

Business Ownership and Self-employment

Almost three in five (58%) of households indicate they own a business. Owning a business was described as being the “owner-operator and having a significant role in decision-making for the firm.” Of those who own a business, more than half say they own multiple businesses – or 30% of the households surveyed. When asked the industry of their businesses, the most commonly identified were ‘Construction, Rental Property, or Real Estate Holdings’; ‘Medical Services’; and ‘Convenience Stores’ (see figure 1).

Figure 1 – Type of Business Owned by Household	
Select All That Apply	Percentage
Construction, Rental Properties, Real Estate Holdings	30
Medical Services, Health Care	17
Other	17
Convenience Stores	16
Retail Stores	13
Engineering, Accounting, Legal, Professional Services	12
Petroleum Stations	9
Hospitality, Lodging, Hotels	8
Restaurants, Fine Dining	6
Technology, Information Management, eCommerce	6
Wireless Telecommunications, Mobile Phone Stores	5
Insurance Companies, Financial Services	5
Supermarkets, Specialty Stores	4
Wholesale Distribution	3
Manufacturing	2
Note: Other included various services such as auto repair, landscaping, security, and travel agency.	

Nearly all of these businesses (98%) are operating in Michigan, but some business owners indicate that they have activities in Ohio, California, and several other states across the country. In terms of employment, 37% of these businesses employ fewer than five people, while 25% have 20 or more employees working in these firms (see figure 2).

Figure 2 – Total Employees Working in Businesses If Household Owns Business	Percentage
0-4	37
5-9	21
10-19	17
20-49	17
50-99	2
100 or more	6

Business Ownership and Immigration

There is no significant difference in terms of business ownership based on whether a respondent was born in the United States. Of the households with an immigrant listed as the head of household, 55%

Figure 3 – Business Ownership Comparison	U.S. Born Percentage
U.S. Born Head of Household Top Five Responses	
Construction, Rental Properties, Real Estate Holdings	21
Engineering, Accounting, Legal, Professional Services	11
Medical Services, Health Care	8
Insurance Companies, Financial Services	7
Retail Stores	7
Business Ownership Comparison	Immigrant Percentage
Immigrant Head of Household Top Five Responses	
Construction, Rental Properties, Real Estate Holdings	16
Convenience Stores	13
Medical Services, Health Care	11
Retail Stores	8
Petroleum Stations	7

report owning a business, compared to 60% with a head of household born in the U.S. Differences in business ownership start to appear in the types of businesses owned. Both Immigrants and Non-immigrants have the majority of their business ownership in ‘Construction, Rental Properties or Real Estate Holdings’, 16% vs. 21% respectively (see figure 3).

Chaldeans born in the U.S. are more likely to own ‘Engineering, Accounting, or other Professional Services’ firms. Chaldeans born in the U.S. are less likely to own ‘Convenience Stores’ than their immigrant counterparts (4% vs. 13%) as well as ‘Petroleum Stations’ (1% vs. 7%).

Other Investments

Nearly one-third (30%) of households say they have other business investments that they do not describe as ownership.

Investing in a business was described as “having limited involvement or a smaller percentage of ownership.” Three-quarters of households

Figure 4 – Type of Business Investment by Household	Percentage
Select All That Apply – Top Four Shown Only	
Construction, Rental Properties, Real Estate Holdings	75
Restaurants, Fine Dining	8
Convenience Stores	6
Hospitality, Lodging, Hotels	6

Most respondents (96%) indicate they own their own home. The median and most common value for that home is \$300,000 to \$400,000. Sixty percent of households have three people living in them, while 20% have five or more

individuals living in the home. Fifty-eight percent of households have at least one person under the age of 18 living in the home.

The median and average reported household incomes are more than twice the median for the State of Michigan.⁷ A quarter (23%) of respondents indicate a household income between

\$50,000 and \$99,999. The median reported was between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and the average reported was between \$150,000 and 200,000 (see figure 6).

Figure 6 – Combined 2015 Household Income	Percentage
Less than \$25,000	6
\$25,000 - \$49,999	10
\$50,000 - \$99,999	23
\$100,000 - \$149,999	19
\$150,000 - \$199,999	11
\$200,000 - \$299,999	15
\$300,000 - \$399,999	4
\$400,000 - \$499,999	5
\$500,000 - \$999,999	5
\$1,000,000 or More	2
Note: Though collected as categorical, analysis of mean and median was done and the ranges are reported in the accompanying text.	

Head of Household

The survey asked respondents to share details on each member of the household and identify the head of household. Most heads of household (90%) are married and 89% of them are male. A quarter (27%) are under 40 years of age and 23% are 40-49 years of age. The average age of the head of household is 52.

In the State of Michigan, 27% of adults have a Bachelor’s degree or higher.⁸ Half (49%) of the heads of household have a Bachelor’s degree or higher (see figure 7).

Figure 7 – Highest Level of Education Completed	Percentage
Head of Household	
Some K-12/Primary Education	10
High School Graduate/Equivalent	30
Associate’s Degree	11
Bachelor’s Degree	24
Master’s/Professional Degree	15
Doctorate Degree	10

Two-thirds (67%) of the heads of household were born in Iraq, with 77% of those immigrating to the U.S. via a family visa. Thirty-eight percent immigrated in the 1970s, 27% immigrated in the 1990s, and 9% have immigrated since 2000. Three-quarters of households (73%) have at least one immigrant in the home.

Comparing Immigrant and Non-immigrant Heads of Household

Immigrant heads of household are older (54 years of age) compared to non-immigrant heads of household (43 years of age). Non-immigrants are more likely to have a college degree (see figure 8 on next page) and a higher household income. However, there are no differences in the number of businesses they own, number of employees in those businesses, or total value of real estate for

Immigrants and Non-immigrants.

Figure 8 – Highest Level of Education Completed Comparison U.S. Born Head of Household Compared to Immigrant Head of Household	U.S. Born Percentage	Immigrant Percentage
Some K-12/Primary Education	1	14
High School Graduate/Equivalent	26	33
Associate’s Degree	14	9
Bachelor’s Degree	29	22
Master’s/Professional Degree	16	13
Doctorate Degree	14	9

Comparing Business Owner and Non-owner Heads of Household

Households that own a business have higher home values (82% of business owner homes are worth at least \$300,000) compared to 52% of those reporting they do not own a business. Similarly, 78% of business owning homes have household incomes over \$100,000, while 40% of non-business owning households have incomes over \$100,000. Households that own a business are larger – 45% have five or more people living in the home and more than 70% have four or more. Of households that do not report owning a business, 30% have five or more people living in the home and 56% report having four or more. This can be partially explained by business owning households being more likely to have children living in them (63% compared to 52% for households that do not own a business).

Cluster Analysis

A cluster analysis was used to further understand the Chaldean dataset. From this analysis, four distinct groups were identified. The segment names and percentage make-up are as follows: ‘Educated Middle Agers’ (30%), ‘Adult Children Living at Home’ (23%), ‘Young Families, born in U.S.’ (32%), and ‘Empty Nesters’ (15%). Highlights of the clusters are detailed below.

- Segment 1 – ‘Educated Middle Agers’ have the largest household, and are more likely to have three generations in the home. They own more businesses and employ more people as compared to the other segments.
- Segment 2 – The ‘Adult Children Living at Home’ group has the highest average income (slightly more than Segment 1) and greater investments in real estate.
- Segment 3 – ‘Young Families, born in U.S.’ average about 36 years of age and 90% of this segment has children under the age of 18.
- Segment 4 – ‘Empty Nesters’ is the oldest segment. This group is more likely to have an immigrant head of household, with 40% arriving in the U.S. before 1970.

Segment 1: Educated Middle Agers (30%)

This segment is between 40 and 60 years of age, with an average age of 48. They are the second largest cluster, and the head of household is likely to be an immigrant (69%). This segment is the most

educated, with advanced degrees held by 30% of the heads of household. They are likely to have more businesses per household and employ more people as compared to the other three segments. Over 80% have children in the home under 18 years of age and nearly 45% of this segment contains an adult still in school. The adults in the home speak Chaldean, at least one adult speaks Arabic, and the majority of the household speaks English. Over 40% of this segment has a household income of more than \$200,000, with 15% making over \$500,000. About 30% have a home valued over \$500,000. In terms of investments, close to 50% of this segment invests in real estate, and of those that do, 21% have holdings of \$2,000,000 or more.

Segment 2: Adult Children Living at Home (23%)

Households in this segment have an average of four adults in the home. The head of household is between 50 and 70 years old, with an average age of 62. Approximately 80% of the homes in this segment have no children under the age of 18. The majority of the families in this segment include an Iraqi born adult (89%). With more adults in the home, there are more Chaldean and Arabic speakers as compared to Segment 1. On average, three of the four adults in the home also speak English. The head of household is likely to be an immigrant (89%) and not have attended college, with 20% having less than a high school education. This segment has an average household income about the same as Segment 1, with 11% making over \$500,000. About 40% have a home valued over \$500,000. Nearly 45% of this segment invests in real estate, and of those that do, 38% have holdings in excess of \$2,000,000. Regarding health, almost half of this group reports experience with high blood pressure.

Segment 3: Young Families, born in United States (32%)

This is the largest of the four segments at 32% of the sample, and the youngest segment, with an average of 36. Over 90% of the households have children. The average home includes two parents and two children. About half have an Iraqi-born head of household, the lowest percentage of all the segments. In terms of language, this young segment reports about 30% of the households having no Arabic speakers in the home, similar to Segment 1. This segment also has the highest percentage of non-Chaldean speaking adults (10%). All of the households contain English speakers. Approximately one-fourth (24%) of this segment has a household income of more than \$200,000, and none report an income over \$500,000. Slightly over 20% have home values over \$500,000. About one-third of this segment invests in real estate, and of those that do, 17% have holdings greater than \$1,000,000. 0% report real estate holdings of \$2,000,000 or more.

Segment 4: Empty Nesters (15%)

This is the smallest and oldest segment, with an average age of 77 years old. None of the households in this segment have children under the age of 18 years old. Ninety-four percent of the heads of households are immigrants. Just 10% have household incomes greater than \$200,000, and 3% report incomes of \$500,000 or more. Thirteen percent have home values over \$500,000. This segment is similar to Segments 1 and 2 in terms of real estate investments, with 42% investing and 23% of those with holdings of \$2,000,000 or more. Given the age of this segment, over half report incidence of high blood pressure, approximately one-third have heart disease, and 26% report having diabetes.

Conclusion

Southeast Michigan's Chaldean community has a very large percentage of business owners and households that own multiple businesses. All of the segments in this research were found to be entrepreneurial; meaning age, country of birth, and length of time living in the U.S. are not predictors of whether a Chaldean household owns a business. The community contributes to economic growth in the region, as twenty-five percent of these businesses employ 20 or more people.

The respondents were also highly educated with incomes above the typical Michigan household. The research points to the community investing those incomes in real estate and other income-generating opportunities. Those with business interests report higher incomes and higher home values.

Based on the recent experiences of the Chaldean Community Foundation,⁹ it is likely that there is an increase in recent Chaldean immigrants in parts of the region. If this is the case, future research could be conducted to better understand the experiences and impacts of those newest community members.



¹ Jane Jacobs. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.

² Jane Jacobs. 1969. *The Economy of Cities*. New York: Random House

³ Richard Florida, "Cities and the Creative Class," *City & Community*, 2:1, March 2003.

⁴ Steve Tobocman, "Global Detroit," August 2010, available at <http://www.globaldetroit.com/global-champions/global-detroit-study/>

⁵ Norm Sinclair, "From the Middle East to the Motor City," *dBusiness*, March-April 2016.

⁶ Kurt Metzger, Principal of Kurt R. Metzger & Associates, used multiple data sources to estimate the Chaldean population. A 2008 Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce study, which estimated the community's size to be approximately 120,000, relied on Census data, survey responses, and church lists. The 2017 estimate utilized these sources, in addition to data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on Iraqi immigrants who arrived as legal permanent residents in the U.S. between 2008 and 2017 and listed the Detroit metropolitan area as their intended home; and data from the Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center, on the number of Iraqi refugees who arrived in Michigan between October 1, 2007 and April 10, 2017 (latest available). The number of legal permanent residents, who arrived in the Detroit metropolitan area from Iraq during the FY2008-FY2017 period, numbered 23,961. The number of refugees from Iraq, who arrived in Michigan between October 1, 2007 and April 10, 2017, numbered 20,894. It is noted that not all U.S. arrivals from Iraq are Chaldean, Assyrian, or Syriac, research shows that the vast majority are.

⁷ The 2011-2015 ACS estimate for median household income in Michigan is \$49,575. Per US Census Bureau at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk

⁸ The 2015 ACS percentage for Michigan adults 25 years of age or higher with a bachelor's degree is 16.5% and for those with a graduate or professional degree is 10.5% Per US Census bureau at <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

⁹ Sherri Welch, "Chaldean Foundation plans \$30 million project, community center expansion," *Crain's Detroit Business*, December 10, 2017.